

Obituary of James M. Goodhue /

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OBITUARY OF JAMES M. GOODHUE. BY REV. E. D. NEILL.

The body that once encased the mind of James M. Goodhue , is no longer visible, but dwells in a narrow house, the silent and dreary grave. Until he ceased to breathe, his value to the community was not fully known. In life, he was viewed chiefly in the aspect of an individual battling for his own interests. In death, it is discovered that he was the individual above all others, who had promoted the general welfare of Minnesota, and especially that of the Capital.

In April, 1849, he found St. Paul nothing more than a frontier Indian trading settlement, known by the savages as the place where they could obtain Minne Wakan , or whisky, and wholly unknown to the civilized world. When he died, with the sword of his pen, he had carved a name and reputation for St. Paul, and he lived long enough to hear men think aloud and say that the day was coming when school boys would learn from their geography that the third city in commercial importance on the banks of the mighty Mississippi, was St. Paul. His most bitter opponents were convinced, whatever might be his course towards them, that he loved Minnesota with all his heart, all his mind, and all his might.

The editor of the Pioneer was unlike other men. Every action, and every line he wrote marked great individuality. He could imitate no man in his manners, nor in his style, neither could any man imitate him. Attempts were 246 sometimes made, but the failure was always very great Impetuous as the whirlwind, with perceptive powers that gave to his mind the eye of a lynx, with a vivid imagination that made the very stones of Minnesota speak her praise; with an intellect as vigorous and elastic as a Damascene blade, he penned editorials which the people of this Territory can never blot out from memory.

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His wit, when it was chastened, caused ascetics to laugh. His sarcasm upon the foibles of society was paralysing and unequaled by Macauley in his review of the life of Barere . His imagination produced a tale of fiction called "Striking a Lead," which has already become a part of the light literature of the West. When in the heat of partizan warfare, all the qualities of his mind were combined to defeat certain measures; the columns of his paper were like a terrific storm in mid-summer amid the Alps. One sentence would be like the dazzling arrowy lightning, peeling in a moment the mountain oak, and riving it from the topmost branch to the deepest root; the next like a crash of awful thunder; and the next like the stunning roar of a torrent of many waters. To employ the remark made in a discourse at his funeral, "With the ingenuity of Vulcan , he would hammer out thunder bolts on the anvil of his mind, and hurl them with the power and dexterity of Jove ."

The contrarieties of his character often increased his force. Imagining his foes to be Cossacks, he often dashed among them with all the recklessness of Murat . The fantastic magnificence of his pen, when in those moods, was as appalling in its temerity as the white ostrich feather and glittering gold band of Napoleon's famed marshal.

His prejudice was inveterate against sham and clap trap. He refused to publish many of the miserable advertisements of those quacks, who seek to palm off their nostrums upon 247 young men, diseased through their own vices. When a "stroller" for a living, or a self-dubbed professor came to town, he sported with him as the Philistines with blind Samson . By sarcasm and ridicule, " Jarley with his wax works" was made to decamp.

When he was unjustifiably harsh, his apology was that in the Medea of Euripides:

"Manthano men hoia dran mello kaka Thumos de kreissona tone emone bouleumatone."

He was not hypocritical; he never wore a mask. His editorials showed all he felt at the hour they were dashed from his pen. When untrammelled by self-interest or party ties, his sentiments proved that he was a man that was often ready to exclaim:

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“Video meliora proboque Deteriora sequor.”

In one of these moods, the first editorial in Minnesota was penned, which we insert as worthy of preservation in the Annals of the Historical Society:

“ The Press in Minnesota .—But little more than one week ago, we landed in St. Paul, amidst a crowd of strangers, with the first printing press that has ever rested upon the soil of Minnesota. Without subscription list or pledges of patronage, or the least personal acquaintance or even correspondence with any of the politicians of this young Territory, we trustingly launched out *The Pioneer* , depending upon the voluntary good will and patronage of the whole people of Minnesota, to extend it whatever support it may deserve. One of our cardinal principles is to *put our trust in the People, and not in princes* . That our success will be measured by the degree of zeal and ability we shall exercise in the advocacy of sound principles and of the permanent interests of this Territory we do not entertain the least doubt. We have been received in St. Paul with a degree of cordiality and warmth, peculiarly grateful to the stranger. Every person we meet, expresses a wish to favor our new and expensive enterprise. All our interests are henceforth identified with the prosperity of this town and the welfare of this Territory. We shall steadily advocate the principles of morality, virtue and religion, and seek for *truth* , without which nothing is excellent. In politics, we design to 248 have no concealments; but to embark in no ultraisms. Our political relations to the Union as a Territory not only exempt us from the necessity, but preclude us from the propriety of enlisting in the great warfare of national politics. Our best interests require us to repose in advance a fair share of confidence in the new Administration, which has in its power the appointment of our principal Territorial officers, and the bestowment of some important appropriations and the passage of many laws deeply affecting our Territorial interests. Our abstract opinions upon the policy or impolicy of national internal improvements, or upon the question whether a tariff is preferable established on the advalorem principle or regulated by a scale of specific duties, may be freely and innocently indulged; but to make such opinions here, serve as

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a gulf between two parties, is as useless and ridiculous as it would be for our respectable neighbors, the Sioux Indians across the river, to quarrel about the protocol to the treaty of peace with Mexico, or the adoption of the Wilmot Proviso. There is nothing more certain than that the interests of Minnesota require an able and efficient press, to represent abroad our wants and to set forth our situation, our resources and our advantages. We hope our friends will remember that the publication of a paper here, will require to be sustained, not only by a large subscription list and liberal advertising, but also by good prices, and what is, *absolutely indispensable* , PROMPT AND EARLY PAYMENT. We cannot live upon promises. Sustain us well now, and we will engage to levy upon you a light tax next year. We want every man in Minnesota to subscribe for the *Pioneer* , and we promise to use every effort to make it useful and interesting to all our readers. We shall find leisure after a few weeks necessarily devoted to making a removal and settlement in St. Paul, to enliven our columns with a much greater variety of local description, &c. Until then, our readers must grant us some indulgence.”

As a paragraphist, he was equaled by few living men. His sentences so leaped with life, that when the distant reader perused his sheet, he seemed to hear the purling brooks and see the agate pavements and crystal waters of the lakes of Minnesota, and he longed to leave the sluggish stream, the deadly malaria, and worn out farms, and begin life anew in the Territory of the sky-tinted waters. When the emigrant from week to week was disposed to despond, and give way to the distress of home sickness, the hopeful sentences of his paper in 249 relation to the prosperous future, chased that dismal feeling away.

The deceased was born in Hebron, N. H., March 31st, 1810. His parents possessed the strong faith and stern virtue of the Puritans, and felt that an education was the greatest treasure they could give their children. After passing through preparatory studies, he entered Amherst College, where he listened to the lectures of the distinguished Geologist, Hitchcock , and other devout men of science. In the year 1832, he received a diploma from that institution. It was his desire to have attended a meeting of his surviving classmates in

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the halls of his "Alma Mater," but another summons came to take "his chamber in the silent halls of Death."

Having studied law, he entered upon the practice of the profession. He became an editor unexpectedly to himself. Having been invited to take the oversight of a press in the lead region of Wisconsin, during the temporary absence of its conductor, he discovered that he increased the interest of the readers in the paper. From that time he began to pay less attention to the legal profession, and was soon known among the citizens of the mines as the editor of the *Grant County Herald*, published at Lancaster, Wisconsin. While residing at this place, he became interested in the Territory "of sky-tinted waters" (Minnesota.) With the independence and temerity of one Benjamin Franklin, he left Lancaster as suddenly as the ostensible editor of the *New England Courant* left Boston, and he arrived at the landing of what is now the capital of Minnesota, with little more money and few more friends than the young printer who landed at Market Street Wharf, in the capital of the then youthful Territory of Pennsylvania. This part of his life he has described with some minuteness in the 250 *Pioneer* of April 18th, 1852, in connection with a lifelike picture of

THE FIRST DAYS OF THE TOWN OF SAINT PAUL.

"The 18th day of April, 1849, was a raw, cloudy day. The steamboat Senator, Capt. Smith, landed at Randall's warehouse, Lower Landing, the only building then there, except Robert's old store. Of the people on shore, we recognized but one person as an acquaintance, Henry Jackson. Took our press, types, printing apparatus all ashore. Went with our men to the house of Mr. Bass, corner of Third and Jackson streets. He kept the only public house in St. Paul, and it was crowded full from cellar to garret. Mr. Bass was very obliging, and did everything possible for our encouragement. The next thing was a printing office; and that it seemed impossible to obtain. Made the acquaintance of C. P. V. Lull and his partner, Gilbert. They furnished us, gratuitously, the lower story of their building for an office—the only vacant room in town—being the building on Third street, since finished off and now occupied as a saloon by Mr. Calder. The weather was cold

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and stormy, and our office was as open as a corn-rick; however, we picked our types up, and made ready for the issue of the first paper ever printed in Minnesota, or within many hundreds of miles of it; but upon search, we found our news chase was left behind. Wm. Nobles , blacksmith, made us a very good one, after a delay of two or three days. The paper was to be named “ *The Epistle of St. Paul* ,” as announced in our prospectus, published in the February preceding; but we found so many little Saints in the Territory, jealous of Saint Paul, that we determined to call our paper “ *The Minnesota Pioneer* .” One hindrance after another delayed our first issue to the 28th of April, ten days. Meantime, Rev. Mr. Neill arrived. It was encouraging to find a young man of education, ready to enlist all that he had or hoped on earth in the fortunes of our town. Stillwater and St. Paul were then running neck and neck as rival towns. Not a foot of pine lumber could be had nearer than Stillwater; but about this time one of the mills at St. Anthony was put in operation; but there were then only a few buildings at the Falls of St. Anthony. We looked about St. Paul, to buy a lot. Mr. Larpenteur's house was built; also, French's house and shop, (now a tin shop,) and the little shop, then the drug store of Dewey & Cavileer , now Major Noah's office, next door west of Calder's (then our printing office); also the office of Judge Pierse , (then the fur store of Olmstead & Rhodes). Mr. Lambert's house was partly finished. As you go up Third and Bench streets, the next buildings were two old tamarac log houses, a little east of where Mr. 251 Neill's church is; then passing the school house, there were two more of the same sort in the street, in front of the houses now occupied by Mr. Benson and Mr. Hollinshead , near the junction of St. Anthony, Bench and Hill streets. Beyond, was the house John R. Irvine lives in, and nothing else but the symptoms of two or three balloon frames. The Fullers were at work putting up a small store with their own hands. Returning, on the right was the old underground dead-fall, in the ground, opposite John R. Irvine's house; then at the junction of Third and Bench streets was Vetel Guerin's log house (now LeDuc's); then the building in which Mr. Curran lives, at that time unfinished; then the old bakery next door east; then Mr. Hopkin's at the corner; turning the corner to the head of Randall's stairs, (not then built,) was the old building still there, (now belonging to F. Steele ,) which Henry Jackson used to own, where he kept grocery, post-office, and

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a tavern, free for all the world and the world's wife. Up along the bank of the river stood, and yet stands, the building occupied as a store by Wm. H. Forbes , the St Paul Outfit; next was a little log building, the nucleus of "the Central House;" next the old log Catholic church, where the Rev. Mr. Ravoux faithfully labored, and sometimes saw miraculous visions during the time of Lent; then the log house belonging to Mr. Laroux , which is now being metamorphosed into a neat building. This brings us back to Vetel's , the junction of Third and Bench streets. Half a dozen other buildings along Robert street, and Mr. Hoyt's neighborhood, in addition to the above, constituted St. Paul. But let it be remembered that the fashionable drinking place then was that little log house new east of Goodrich's brick store. Mr. Bass was busy in hurrying up a new saloon, the building now occupied as the clerk's office by Mr. Wilkinson , on the spot where the Minnesota Outfit stands. The ground west of Robert and north of Third streets was covered with any quantity of hewed timber stripped from the forest opposite town. We looked about for a lot, and saw that the two ends of the town must soon unite in the middle. Along the lower end of Third street, owners of lots had the coolness to ask from one hundred to two hundred dollars a lot. Between Lambert's and where the Sligo Iron Store is, on Third street, the price was seventy-five and soon after ninety dollars. We bought a fractional lot with Dr. Dewey ; and on our half of it built the middle section of the building where the *Pioneer* office is, for a dwelling house, and lived in it through the next year, without having it lathed or plastered.

"But to return a little. We were at length prepared to issue our first number. We had no subscribers; for then there were but a handful of people in the whole Territory; and the majority of those were Canadians 252 and half breeds. Not a Territorial officer had yet arrived. We remember present, at the date of our first issue, Mr. Lull , Mr. Cavileer , Mr. Neill , and perhaps Maj. Murphy . The people wanted no politics, and we gave them none; they wanted information of all sorts about Minnesota; and that is what we furnished them with. We advocated Minnesota, morality and religion, from the beginning. Wm. B. Brown built a shell of a building, (being the south end of the Sligo Iron Store now,) which Mr. Neill

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occupied for a meeting house. It was half filled with hearers on Sundays; for Sundays was like any other day, or perhaps rather more so.

“This town grew rapidly. The boats came up loaded with immigrants; but then, as now, a great many feeble, weak-hearted folks were frozen out and went back down the river, not being made of the right sort of stuff. Mr. Owens came up with the “*Register*” press, from Cincinnati, one number of that journal having been printed in that city. Col. James Hughes also came from Ohio with the *Chronicle*, which was issued soon after from the building where the “*Minnesotian*” is now published. Soon after, the “*Register*,” by M'lean & Owens, was issued from the building that is now the law office of Simons & Masterson, St. Anthony street. After a few months, the *Chronicle and Register* were united in the old *Chronicle* office, under the firm name and style of Owens & M'lean & Hughes & Quay. Mr. Quay soon left the office; and soon after Col. Hughes sold out, and Mr. M'lean became sole proprietor of both offices, and Owens editor, Major M'lean being appointed Sioux Agent at Fort Snelling.”

A short period before he was confined to his room, he fell from his ferry boat into the river, and was obliged to use great exertion to keep from drowning; this, in connection with a mind oppressed by the cares of one so active in life, is supposed to have shortened his days on earth. Not long after he was on a bed of sickness, there seemed to be the presentiment that his heart might have commenced “beating his funeral march to the grave.”

Some days before he died, with great calmness of mind, he conversed with the minister, whose services he attended when in health. In looking back upon his life, he saw much to regret. He acknowledged his unworthiness in the sight of Heaven, and hoped that he had placed his trust in his Redeemer. He was desirous to live in order that he might show to the world that he had determined to act upon new resolutions. To the last, he felt an interest in Minnesota. During his sickness he was patient, and freely forgave all his enemies.

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His spirit left his body on Friday evening, August 27th, 1852, at half past eight o'clock. His funeral took place on Sunday afternoon. A discourse was delivered in the Presbyterian Church to the largest assembly ever convened upon a similar occasion in Minnesota.

The Legislative Assembly of 1853, very properly recognized his services in bringing Minnesota into notice, by giving his name to one of the new counties, formed out of the recently ceded Dakota lands.